

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 09379 241038Z

12

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5457

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USINT BAGHDAD

UNCLAS BEIRUT 9379

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, LE

SUBJ: CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY'S CAMPAIGN
TO SOLICIT MEMBERSHIP BY FOREIGN FIRMS - INFLUENCE
OF CHAMBER GROWS

1. IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE INCREASINGLY
IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY FOREIGN FIRMS IN LEBANON,
THE BEIRUT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY HAS
ORGANIZED A CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE MEMBERSHIP BY
FOREIGN FIRMS BASED HERE. TOWARDS THIS END, IT
IS SETTING UP A SEPARATE DEPARTMENT DEVOTED TO
FOREIGN FIRMS AND THEIR PARTICULAR NEEDS WHICH,
INTER ALIA, INCLUDE SUCH MATTERS AS LABOR PERMITS
FOR NON-LEBANESE EMPLOYEES. THIS CAMPAIGN FOLLOWS
ONE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE BANKS IN LEBANON (BOTH
DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN) TO JOIN THE CHAMBER.

2. SINCE THE ELECTION OF ITS PRESENT PRESIDENT,
ADNAN KASSAR, THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
HAS BEEN PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN
THE LIFE OF LEBANON'S ECONOMY. RIGHT FROM THE START,
KASSAR SUCCEEDED IN STRIKING A HAPPY BALANCE BETWEEN
THE COUNTRY'S COMMERCIAL INTERESTS AND INDUSTRIAL
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INTERESTS, WHICH HAD BEEN TRADITIONALLY AT LOGGERHEADS

ON MANY ISSUES. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A MOVE TO HAVE THE BEIRUT CHAMBER JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, IN ADDITION TO THE FEDERATION OF ARAB CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE. A FURTHER INNOVATION ON KASSAR'S PART WAS THE INAUGURATION OF DISCUSSIONS WITH LEBANESE TRADE UNIONS IN ORDER TO REACH JOINT MANAGEMENT/LABOR POSITIONS ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE ECONOMY.

3. KASSAR'S EFFORTS SEEM TO HAVE PAID OFF RATHER WELL. AT THE MEETING IN MADRID RECENTLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, HE WAS ELECTED TO THE TWELVE-MAN EXECUTIVE BOARD. HE IS ALSO VICE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF ARAB CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, WHICH HAS ITS SEAT IN BEIRUT, AND WHICH WILL HOLD ITS ANNUAL MEETING HERE IN OCTOBER (DELAYED FROM LAST MAY BECAUSE OF THE LOCAL "TROUBLES").
GODLEY

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